



**Bald Head Woods Reserve  
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, December 3, 2020 – 2 pm  
WebEx**

**Attendance**

<b><u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u></b>	<b><u>Present</u></b>
Bald Head Island Conservancy (BHIC) – Chris Shank, Beth Darrow	Yes
Village of Bald Head Island, Carin Faulkner	Yes
Village of Bald Head Island Public Safety	No
Natural Heritage Program, Mike Schafale	Yes
<b><u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u></b>	
Al Buzzard	No
<b><u>Others Present</u></b>	
Hope Sutton, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Stewardship Coordinator/Southern Sites Manager	
Elizabeth Colhoun, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Stewardship and Education Specialist	
Christy Simmons, DCM Public Information Officer	

**Welcome – Hope Sutton**

The site manager welcomed the committee to the Fall 2020 meeting, reviewed the agenda, and called roll. A brief introduction to the web meeting platform was provided by Christy Simmons, DCM Public Information Officer.

**Reserve-wide Administrative Update – Hope Sutton**

The Reserve-wide Update, which now includes a range of reserve activities was shared with committee members prior to the meeting. Members had no comments or questions about the updates. The update in its entirety is included as Appendix A.

## **Site Update and Old Business – Hope Sutton**

- *Site work and hurricane recovery trail work*
  - The post-hurricane Isaias site assessment was conducted on August 10. Although there were downed branches and trees in several locations along the trails, no public safety issues were noted, so the site was not closed. Trail work was conducted by a team from the reserve, the Bald Head Island Conservancy (BHIC), and The Nature Conservancy, whose chain saw qualified staff completed all of the large chain saw work. The loop, center, and east trails and the majority of the north trail were returned to fully passable status. The western portion of the north trail will be addressed by BHIC staff and volunteers during December. The reserve greatly appreciates the partner support of The Nature Conservancy and the BHIC with maintaining the trails within the reserve. Discussion occurred regarding the importance of identifying several options for getting post-storm trail work completed to reduced the amount of time trails are inaccessible to the public.
- *Trail maintenance standards*
  - The reserve's trail maintenance standard operating procedure was provided to the BHIC to inform trail maintenance efforts on the site. This is a working document that will be updated periodically to allow for adaptation as conditions change. The BHIC has suggested that some type of document that spells out the process for addressing storm damage and trail maintenance needs that includes roles and responsibilities may help facilitate quicker response. Staff from the reserve and the BHIC will work on this together during the winter. Discussion extended to considering the future of the deer exclosures located within the forest. The importance of these research structures for further study of impacts and regeneration in the forest was highlighted. The Reserve and the Conservancy will work together to address recent damage to the exclosures and plan for maintenance.
- *Monitoring program associated with wellfield*
  - The site manager and the Village's well contractor, Jim Cornette of Applied Resource Management (ARM), discussed the next steps involved in reviewing monitoring data from this project. Monitoring began during the summer of 2015 and both ARM and BHIC have continued well monitoring activities since initiation. Vegetation monitoring has not been conducted most years due to storms, high precipitation levels, and resulting high water levels on the island. A five-year review of data by the members of the monitoring advisory group will need to occur before future needs can be determined. Discussion occurred about the importance of wet year data as baseline data and the need for a plan to continue collecting these data for comparison when drier years or drought conditions occur.
- *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*
  - Discussion with the reserve program manager has resulted in permission to go forward with development of an updated MOU between Bald Head Island Conservancy and the reserve. The stewardship coordinator will work on this during the winter months and will discuss the document's details with Chris Shank by email.

## **New Business – Hope Sutton**

- *Member selection process*
  - Some of the Reserve's Local Advisory Committees have members whose terms have expired, so we will be preparing to hold a member application and selection process during

the late spring or early summer of 2021. We wanted to provide this advance notice to committee members since the application period will be announced to the public in conjunction with the press release for the spring meetings. No members of the Bald Head Island committee have expiring terms, but an application period would allow additional community members to apply to serve. Members should plan to share the application information with community members or share contact information for interested parties with the site manager when the application period is due to start.

**Roundtable**

- No further comments.

**Public comments**

- None

**Action Items**

- Reserve staff will contact committee members during the winter to establish a date for the spring meeting.
- Reserve staff will follow up with Village staff regarding monitoring well data and summary report.
- Reserve staff will follow up with BHIC regarding trail maintenance and deer enclosure repairs.
- Reserve staff will follow up with BHUC staff regarding a draft MOU between the two entities.

## Appendix A

### **N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve Fall 2020 Local Advisory Committee Meetings Reserve-wide Update**

#### COVID-19 Update

Below is a summary of how the Reserve is working during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Staff continue to telework and all offices remain closed to visitors.
- All Reserve sites are open to visitors. The Reserve will continue to closely monitor state and local COVID-19 guidelines and directives and encourage Reserve visitors to comply with these measures to protect themselves and their communities; current guidelines and directives are located [here](#).
- All in-person trainings and public programming remain canceled; education and training staff are conducting virtual programming as well as assisting partners with virtual meeting support.
- Research and stewardship work is continuing at the sites, although activities are more limited as they must meet social distancing requirements.

#### Hurricane Isaias Reserve Impacts

- All Reserve sites remained open during and following Hurricane Isaias.
- Four vessels were displaced during Isaias on the Masonboro Island Reserve; three of the displaced vessels were removed by the owners/contractors.
- A water quality monitoring sonde and its piling infrastructure at the Zeke's Island Reserve disappeared in the storm. Staff are investigating replacement options.
- All of the trails at the Bald Head Woods Reserve were littered with downed trees and limbs. Thank you to The Nature Conservancy staff for assisting Reserve staff with the trail clean-up.

#### Periodic Rules Review

The Rules Review Commission approved the requested re-adoption timeline of November 30, 2021 for Coastal Reserve rules (15A NCAC 070). At its September 2020 meeting, the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission provided unanimous support of the Division's proposed amendments for re-adoption of 15A NCAC 070 to inform its recommendation to the Department. The proposed amendments reflected the input previously provided by the local advisory committees. Staff are preparing the required fiscal analysis as part of the rule-making process. This work is part of the Legislative Periodic Review and Expiration of Existing Rules process (G.S. 150B-21.3A).

#### N.C. NERR Management Plan

The final revised management plan for the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve for 2020-2025 is located [here](#) on the Reserve website. NOAA will publish notification of the plan's availability in the federal register shortly.

#### N.C. NERR Federal Program Evaluation

NOAA conducts periodic evaluations of coastal management programs and National Estuarine Research Reserves as required by the federal Coastal Zone Management Act. The virtual site visit for NOAA's evaluation of the N.C. coastal management program and N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve took place the week of October 5 with a public meeting for both programs held on October 7. Findings from the evaluations are anticipated in early 2021.

#### Federal Budget

The budget table below is a summary of the current status of the federal budget\* for fiscal years 17, 18, 19, and 20 as it relates to the Coastal Reserve.

Federal Budget Lines	Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2017	Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2018	Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2019	Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2020
NERRS Operations	\$23.5 M	\$25 M	\$27M	\$27.5 M
NERRS Procurement, Acquisition, & Construction (PAC)	\$1.7M	\$1.7M	\$1.9M	\$4.5M
CZM Grants	\$70 M	\$75 M	\$75.5M	\$77 M

- Federal Fiscal Year 21: The President’s budget request does not include funding for the NERRS Operations and PAC, or the CZM Grants budget lines. The House funding level for NERRS Operations for FY21 is \$28.25M and the Senate funding level is \$29M.
- Thank you to the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association and Friends of the Reserve for their work to educate Congress on the value of the national system and the NCNERR.

#### Program Highlights

- **Living on a Barrier Island Workshop:** The Coastal Training Program hosted a virtual workshop in September for real estate professionals to learn the ecology and geology of barrier islands and the rules and policies that govern development. The workshop covered updates to the National Flood Insurance Program, hurricane-resistant construction and wind insurance incentives, and using native plantings for the coastal landscape.
- **Drones in the Coastal Zone Virtual Workshop Series:** Reserve staff assisted in organizing and facilitating the Drones in the Coastal Zone virtual workshop series hosted by SECOORA in October. The series covered the use of unoccupied aircraft systems in ecosystem and fisheries management in the Southeast and U.S. Caribbean, including governmental policy and procedures, mission planning, data management, demonstrations on emerging drone technologies, and more. Session recordings are available to view on this [webpage](#) and a workshop report will be available soon.
- The Reserve was selected to receive funding from the DCM Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access Program for the replacement of decking, structural joists, and pilings for the **Currituck Banks Reserve boardwalk** which ends at a viewpoint of the Currituck Sound. Work will take place in 2021.

#### Staffing News

- Congratulations to Reserve staff award winners!
  - **Whitney Jenkins** (Coastal Training Program Coordinator) and **Paula Gillikin** (Central Sites Manager) each received 2020 Pelican Awards from the NC Coastal Federation in a virtual awards program on August 6. Both were recognized in the “Coastwide Winners” category – Paula received an award for “Exceptional Leadership and Facilitation of Coastal Stewardship” and Whitney for “Exemplary Commitment to Coastal Resource Training and Collaboration.”
  - **Brandon Puckett**, Research Coordinator, received the Division of Coastal Management’s 2020 Distinguished Service Award at a virtual Department of Environmental Quality awards program on November 10. Brandon was recognized for his scope of high quality and impactful work, including his work on living shorelines and

leadership in the multi-component Beaufort Inlet Dredging Monitoring Project to inform the state's response to the US Army Corps of Engineers' proposals for summertime dredging of federal shipping channels at NC State Ports.

- **Duncan Anderson** joined the Reserve as a temporary GIS Specialist. Duncan is a recent graduate of NC State University where he received his B.S. in Environmental Technology and Management. He is working to organize and further the program's mapping and cataloging spatial information from all 10 Reserve sites.
- **Marae Lindquist** is our first National Estuarine Research Reserve System Margaret A. Davidson Fellow. Marae is a PhD student from UNC-W Department of Biology and Marine Biology. She will be researching the impacts of sea level rise on wintering populations of saltmarsh and seaside sparrows at four reserve sites (Rachel Carson, Masonboro Island, Zeke's Island, and Bird Island Reserves). This research will address management priorities for the Reserve and will provide important information to inform management of habitats that benefit sensitive species. The two-year fellowship began in September; click [here](#) to learn more about Marae's work and the fellowship.
- **Grace Roskar** will join the Reserve November 30 as the temporary Natural Resources Resilience Specialist. Grace has a B.S. in marine science and biology from the University of Miami and a M.S. in biology from Florida Atlantic University's Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute. Grace recently completed a Sea Grant Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship, during which she worked for NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology as a habitat science specialist. Grace will be working with staff on the Rachel Carson Reserve resilience plan, funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Emergency Coastal Resilience Fund.
- **Jason Brown**, Reserve Northern Sites Manager, accepted another job within DEQ in Raleigh and his last day with the Reserve was September 4. **Steve Jarvis** re-joined the Reserve as a part-time employee to help manage the Currituck Banks, Kitty Hawk Woods, and Buxton Woods Reserve. Interviews were conducted to fill the vacant position November 5-6.

\* The federal fiscal year is October 1-September 30. The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) budget line provides funding to the 29 reserves within the System through cooperative agreements that are matched by the states, and supports national coordination of programs and implementation of system-wide and competitive projects. The Coastal Zone Management (CZM) grants budget line provides funding to coastal states with approved coastal management programs through cooperative agreements that are matched by the states. The Division of Coastal Management (DCM) receives funding from both budget lines to operate the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve (NCNERR) and N.C. Coastal Management Program. The CZM cooperative agreement that DCM receives provides funding for Reserve staffing, state site operations, and administrative support.